



# COMPOSER SPOTLIGHT



## LILI BOULANGER

1893–1918

Style: Romantic/  
Impressionistic



Paris Conservatoire

### A Young Talent

Lili Boulanger was surrounded by successful musicians at a young age. Her father Ernesto was a teacher at the Paris Conservatoire. Her grandfather had been a well-known cellist and her grandmother a singer. Fauré discovered that Boulanger had perfect pitch at the age of two. By the age of five, she was tagging along with her 10-year-old sister Nadia Boulanger to classes at the Paris Conservatoire.

### Like Father, Like Daughter

Her father won France's most prestigious music prize, the Prix de Rome, in 1835. Both Lili and her sister Nadia Boulanger aspired to win the Prix de Rome just like their father. Although Nadia never succeeded, Lili became the first woman to win the prize in 1913 with her cantata *Faust et Hélène*. Her sister Nadia went on to be one of the most famous teachers of composition.



### Influences

Boulanger was greatly affected by the death of her father in 1900, and many of her pieces express grief and loss. One can also hear features of Fauré and Debussy in her music. Lili Boulanger was similarly a major influence on a number of other composers such as Arthur Honneger.

### Hardworking Spirit

In addition to composing, Boulanger studied organ with Louis Vierne. She also sang and played the piano, violin, cello, and harp. She was known to be quite tenacious and tireless with her work. In fact, during her first attempt at winning the Prix de Rome in 1912, she collapsed from illness. She continued writing ferociously on her death bed until her untimely death at the age of 24. Interestingly, she died just 10 days before Claude Debussy.

### Significant Works:

- Faust et Hélène
- Trois morceaux pour piano
- Pie Jesu